

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, NP
SUBJECT: RETURN OF B. P. KOIRALA TO KATHMANDU

1. AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS MEDICAL TREATMENT IN U. S. AND BRIEF STOPOVER IN INDIA, FORMER PRIME MINISTER KOIRALA RETURNED ON SCHEDULE TO KATHMANDU AUGUST 20. INSTEAD OF BEING REARRESTED TO FACE CHARGES THAT ARE STILL PENDING IN COURT AGAINST HIM AS MANY EXPECTED, HE WAS ESCORTED FROM AIRPORT TO HIS HOME IN KATHMANDU WHERE HE HAS BEEN HOLDING COURT TO FRIENDS, ADMIRERS AND JOURNALISTS. ONLY LEGAL RESTRICTION PLACED ON HIM SO FAR HAS BEEN ORDER TO REPORT TO COURT WITHIN 15 DAYS OF HIS ARRIVAL.

2. NEWS OF KOIRALA'S SCHEDULED ARRIVAL GENERATED CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION LOCALLY AS TO HOW GON WAS TO HANDLE HIM AS WELL AS DEBATE AMONG POLITICIANS WHETHER TO USE OCCASION OF KOIRALA'S RETURN FOR ANTI-GOVERNMENT AND ANTI-PANCHAYAT PROCESSIONS. GON PLAYED ITS CARDS CLOSE TO CHEST AND NEVER REVEALED ITS HAND. AT LAST MINUTE LOCAL POLITICAL GROUPS DECIDED NOT TO

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ARRANGE DEMONSTRATIONS OF POPULAR SUPPORT FOR KOIRALA AND TO AWAIT DEVELOPMENTS. ACCORDINGLY CROWDS AT AIRPORT TO RECEIVED KOIRALA WERE PREDOMINANTLY GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS TOTALING SEVERAL THOUSAND WHO FAR OUTNUMBERED KOIRALA'S FRIENDS. BANNERS AND SLOGANS CARRIED BY FORMER CALLED FOR NATIONAL UNITY AND "DOWN WITH FOREIGN

DOGS" (IN NEPALESE CONTEXT READ INDIAN FOR FOREIGN DOGS).

3. SHORTLY AFTER HIS ARRIVAL AT RESIDENCE KOIRALA MET WITH JORNALISTS. HE TOLD THEM THAT ON AUGUST 21 HE WOULD BE PETITIONING KING FOR AUDIENCE AND HOPED TO SEE HIM SOON TO DISCUSS "NATIONAL RECONCILIATION." HE AVOIDED GETTING DRAWN INTO DISCUSSION OF POLITICAL SITUATION WITH JOURNALISTS ON GROUNDS THAT THIS WAS PREMATURE BEFORE HIS MEETING WITH KING. ASKED FOR HIS VIEWS ABOUT RECENT APPOINTMENT OF HIS HALF BROTHER M.P. KOIRALA TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, KOIRALA BRUSHED THIS OFF WITH A COMMENT THAT THIS WAS JUST ONE PERSON REPLACING ANOTHER. AS FOR MESSAGES IN BANNERS AND SLOGANS AT AIRPORT, HE SAID THIS DEMONSTRATED BANKRUPTCY OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM. IN ANSWER TO QUESTION ON WHETHER HE COMPARED HIMSELF TO SOVIET DISSIDENTS, HE REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT BECAUSE UNLIKE THEM HE HAD A LARGE POPULAR FOLLOWING IN COUNTRY AND REPRESENTED A MOVEMENT WHICH IN FREE ELECTIONS WOULD SWEEP THE COUNTRY. ASKED WHETHER HE WAS SURPRISED AT NOT BEING AGAIN TAKEN INTO CUSTODY, HE SAID THAT HE WAS NOT SURPRISED AS ATMOSPHERE IN COUNTRY WAS MORE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RELAXED AND SITUATION MORE PROPITIOUS FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN MONARCHY AND LOCAL GROUPS.

4. ON SUBJECT OF HIS HEALTH, KOIRALA SAID THAT ARTERY WHICH HAD BEEN OPERATED ON AGAIN IN NEW YORK WAS FINE, BUT THAT OTHER ONE WAS ONLY 20 PERCENT EFFECTIVE AND IF ITS CONDITION DETERIORATED HE WOULD HAVE TO RUSH BACK TO THE U.S. A JOURNALIST WHO ATTENDED PRESS CONFERENCE AND SAW HIM JUST BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE TO U.S. THIS SPRING REPORTED THAT HE SEEMED LESS FRAGILE AND IN MUCH BETTER HEALTH THAN AT TIME OF HIS DEPARTURE AND HIS VOICE STRONGER. AT PRESS CONFERENCE KOIRALA EXPRESSED HOPE HIS VOICE WOULD RETURN TO NORMAL WITHIN YEAR.

5. PRESS CONFERENCE BROKE UP FOR ENDLESS STREAM OF PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE WAITING TO SEE KOIRALA.

6. UNLIKE SILENT TREATMENT ACCORDED KOIRALA ON HIS LAST RETURN TO NEPAL FROM U.S. HIS ARRIVAL

THIS TIME WAS GIVEN FRONT PAGE PROMINENCE.
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